

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT. UCA

SUBJECT: BIRON BREATHES MORE HOT AIR THAN NEW LIFE INTO
UNION NATIONALE

1. QUEBEC'S "OTHER" OPPOSITION PARTY, THE UNION NATIONALE, HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE NEWS IN RECENT MONTHS AS ATTENTION FOCUSED ON THE RENASCENT LIBERALS UNDER CLAUDE RYAN. IN AN ATTEMPT TO STOP THIS SLIDE TOWARD POLITICAL ECLIPSE AND TO STAKE OUT A DISTINCTIVE POSITION FOR HIS PARTY, UN LEADER RODRIGUE BIRON CAME OUT SWINGING WILDLY AT A PARTY CONCLAVE IN TROIS RIVIERES LAST SUNDAY (APR 23). BIRON HAD HASTILY UPGRADED WHAT WAS ORIGINALLY TO HAVE BEEN A MINOR REGIONAL MEETING INTO A FULL-DRESS PARTYEP RALLY ATTENDED BY SOME 2, 000 MILITANTS.

2. HAVING APPARENTLY COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE NATIONAL UNITY FIELD LACKED PROMISE FOR THE UN, BIRON CONCENTRATED ON THE ECONOMY. HE ACCUSED THE PARTI QUEBECOIS OF ENGINEERING THE "ECONOMIC DESTRUCTION OF QUEBEC." OVER DOLS 4 BILLION HAS LEFT THE PROVINCE SINCE TH E ELECTION OF THE PQ, HE SAID, CREATING OVER 80,000UNEMPLOYED; A FURTHER DOLS 2 BILLION WILL LEAVE THIS YEAR, MEANING A FURTHER 40-50,000 WORKERS ON
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THE DOLE. HE DECLARED THAT THE UN WAS PREPARING A "DOSSIER NOIR" ADDRESSING THE "CATASTROPHIC" ECONOMIC RECORD OF THE PQ GOVERNMENT. BIRON ALSO EXCORIATED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INTERFERENCE IN PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS ON THE SALES TAX ISSUE AND INCLUDED NEW LIBERAL LEADER RYAN IN HIS CONDEMNATIONS FOR NOT SPEAKING OUT ON THE SALES TAX.
"IT IS THE OTTAWA CLIQUE WHICH ELECTED CLAUDE RYAN," HE SAID, AND

"TO VOTE FOR RYAN THE EXT TIME WOULD BE TO VOTE DIRECTLY FOR OTTAWA AND AGAINST QUEBEC." THE TWO GREATEST "ENEMIES OF QUEBEC," HE CONCLUDED, ARE THE LIBERALS AND THE PQ.

3. COMMENT: WITH NOTHING PARTICULARLY DISTINCTIVE TO OFFER BY WAY OF CONSTITUTIONAL ALTERNATIVES AND AS HEAD OF A PARTY GOING NOWHERE POLITICALLY, BIRON HAS BEEN REDUCED TO BLUSTER. THE UNION NATIONALE ALMOST DROPPED FROM SIGHT IN THE PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS OF 1974, ONLY TO REVIVE IN 1976 AS A RESULT OF PROTEST VOTES BY DISAFFECTED LIBERALS UNWILLING GO THE WHOLE WAY BY VOTING PQ. THESE EX-LIBERALS NOW APPEAR TO BE MOVING BACK TO THEIR FORMER PARTY, AND THE UNION NATIONALE IS RESUMING ITS PLACE AS A RURAL BASED SPLINTER PARTY KEPT ALIVE MAINLY BY MEMORIES OF PAST GLORY. AS FOR RYAN, HE HAS ALREADY WEATHERED ACCUSATIONS BY RAYMOND GARNEAU THAT HE IS A "CRYPTO-SEPARATIST" AND HAS LITTLE TO FEAR FROM ACCUSATIONS BY UN OF BEING OTTAWA'S PUPPET.

IT'S A LONG WAY TO GO UNTIL THE NEXT PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS, BUT BIRON'S INITIAL ATTEMPT, FUELED BY THE TRADITIONAL LUNCH OF BEANS AND MEAT PIE, TO BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO HIS PARTY HAS RESULTED LARGELY IN AN EXPLOSION OF HOT AIR.

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